Richard Francis Burton

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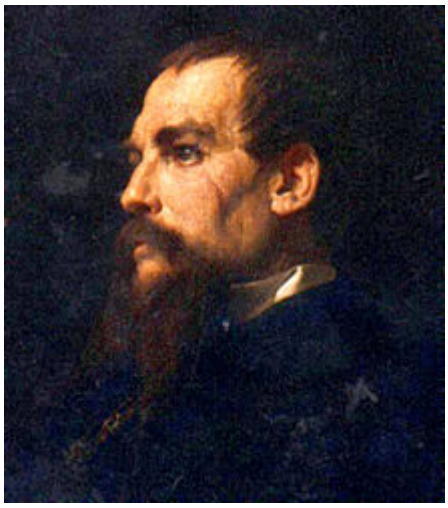
Sir Richard Francis Burton



Sir Richard Burton, portrait by Frederic Leighton, National Portrait Gallery

Born	19 March 1821 Torquay, England
Died	20 October 1890 (aged 69) Trieste, Austria-Hungary
Resting place	St. Mary Magdalen's Church, London, England
Nationality	British
Known for	Exploration, Writing, Languages, Orientalist
Spouse	Isabel Burton (m. 1861–1890)

Captain **Sir Richard Francis Burton** KCMG FRGS (19 March 1821 – 20 October 1890) was a British explorer, translator, writer, soldier, orientalist, ethnologist, spy, linguist, poet, fencer and diplomat. He was known for his travels and explorations within Asia, Africa and the Americas as well as his extraordinary knowledge of languages and cultures. According to one count, he spoke 29 European, Asian, and African languages.[1]

Burton's best-known achievements include travelling in disguise to Mecca, an unexpurgated translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* (also commonly called *The Arabian Nights* in English after Andrew Lang's abridgement), bringing the *Kama Sutra* to publication in English, and journeying with John Hanning Speke as the first Europeans led by Africa's greatest explorer guide, Sidi Mubarak Bombay, utilizing route information by Indian and Omani merchants who traded in the region, to visit the Great Lakes of Africa in search of the source of the Nile. Burton extensively criticized colonial policies (to the detriment of his career) in his works and letters. He was a prolific and erudite author and wrote numerous books and scholarly articles about subjects including human behaviour, travel, falconry, fencing, sexual practices, and ethnography. A unique feature of his books is the copious footnotes and appendices containing remarkable observations and unexpurgated information.

He was a captain in the army of the East India Company serving in India (and later, briefly, in the Crimean War). Following this he was engaged by the Royal Geographical Society to explore the east coast of Africa and led an expedition guided by the locals and was the first European to see Lake Tanganyika. In later life he served as British consul in Fernando Po, Santos, Damascus and, finally, Trieste. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and was awarded a knighthood (KCMG) in 1886.

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Early life and education (1822–1842)

Burton was born in Torquay, Devon, at 21:30 on 19 March 1821; in his autobiography, he falsely claimed to have been born in the family home at Barham House in Elstree in Hertfordshire.[2][3] He was baptised on 2 September 1821 at Elstree Church in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire.[4] His father, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Netterville Burton, 36th Regiment, was an Irish-born British army officer of Anglo-Irish extraction. His mother, Martha Baker, was the heiress of a wealthy squire from Hertfordshire. Burton had two siblings, Maria Katherine Elizabeth Burton (who married Lt.-General Sir Henry William Stisted) and Edward Joseph Netterville Burton, born in 1823 and 1824, respectively.[5]

Burton's family travelled considerably during his childhood. In 1825, they moved to Tours, France. Burton's early education was provided by various tutors employed by his parents. He first began a formal education in 1829 at a preparatory school on Richmond Green in Richmond, London run by Rev. Charles Delafosse.[6] Over the next few years, his family travelled between England, France, and Italy. Burton showed an early gift for languages and quickly learned French, Italian, Neapolitan, and Latin, as well as several dialects. During his youth, he was rumoured to have carried on an affair with a young Roma (Gypsy) woman, even learning the rudiments of her language. The peregrinations of his youth may have encouraged Burton to regard himself as an outsider for much of his life. As he put it, "Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from none but self expect applause".[7]

Richard Francis matriculated at Trinity College, Oxford on 19 November 1840. Before getting rooms in college, he lived for a short time in the house of Dr. William Alexander Greenhill, then physician to the Radcliffe Infirmary. Here he met John Henry Newman, whose churchwarden was Dr. Greenhill. Despite his intelligence and ability, Richard Francis soon antagonized his teachers and peers. During his first term, he is said to have challenged another student to a duel after the latter mocked Burton's moustache. Burton continued to gratify his love of languages by studying Arabic; he also spent his time learning falconry and fencing. In 1842, he attended a steeplechase in deliberate violation of college rules and subsequently dared to tell the college authorities that students should be allowed to attend such events. Hoping to be merely "rusticated"—that is, suspended with the possibility of reinstatement, the punishment of some less provocative students who had visited the steeplechase—he was instead permanently expelled from Trinity College. In a final jab at the environment he had come to despise, Burton reportedly trampled the College's flower beds with his horse and carriage while departing Oxford.

Army career (1842–1853)

In his own words "fit for nothing but to be shot at for six pence a day",[8] Burton enlisted in the army of the East India Company at the behest of his ex-college classmates who were already members. He hoped to fight in the first Afghan war but the conflict was over before he arrived in India. He was posted to the 18th Bombay Native Infantry based in Gujarat and under the command of General Sir Charles James Napier. While in India he became a proficient speaker of Hindustani, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi and Marathi as well as Persian and Arabic. His studies of Hindu culture had progressed to such an extent that "my Hindu teacher officially allowed me to wear the Janeu (Brahmanical Thread)"[9] although the truth of this has been questioned since it would usually have required long study, fasting and a partial shaving of the head. Burton's interest (and active participation) in the cultures and religions of India was considered peculiar by some of his fellow soldiers who accused him of "going native" and called him "the White Nigger". Burton had many peculiar habits that set him apart from other soldiers. While in the army, he kept a large menagerie of tame monkeys in the hopes of learning their language.[10] He also earned the name "Ruffian Dick" for his "demonic ferocity as a fighter and because he had fought in single combat more enemies than perhaps any other man of his time."[11]

He was appointed to the Sindh survey, where he learned to use the measuring equipment that would later be useful in his career as an explorer. At this time he began to travel in disguise. He adopted the alias of Mirza Abdullah and often fooled local people and fellow officers into failing to recognise him. It was at this point that he began to work as an agent for Napier and, although details of exactly what this work entailed are not known, it is known that he participated in an undercover investigation of a brothel in Karachi said to be frequented by English soldiers where the prostitutes were young boys. His life-long interest in sexual practices led him to produce a detailed report which was later to cause trouble for Burton when subsequent readers of the report (which Burton had been assured would be kept secret) came to believe that Burton had, himself, participated in some of the practices described in his writing.

In March 1849 he returned to Europe on sick leave. In 1850 he wrote his first book *Goa and the Blue Mountains*, a guide to the Goa region. He travelled to Boulogne to visit the fencing school there and it was there where he first encountered his future wife Isabel Arundell, a young Catholic woman from a good family.

First explorations and journey to Mecca (1851–1853)

Burton in Arabic dress

Motivated by his love of adventure, Burton got the approval of the Royal Geographical Society for an exploration of the area and he gained permission from the Board of Directors of the British East India Company to take leave from the army. His seven years in India gave Burton a familiarity with the customs and behaviour of Muslims and prepared him to attempt a Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca and, in this case,

Medina). It was this journey, undertaken in 1853, which first made Burton famous. He had planned it whilst travelling disguised among the Muslims of Sindh, and had laboriously prepared for the ordeal by study and practice (including being circumcised to further lower the risk of being discovered).

Although Burton was not the first non-Muslim European to make the *Hajj* (such honor belongs to Ludovico de Varthema in 1503),[12] his pilgrimage is the most famous and the best documented of the time. He adopted various disguises including that of a Pashtun to account for any oddities in speech, but he still had to demonstrate an understanding of intricate Islamic ritual, and a familiarity with the minutiae of Eastern manners and etiquette. Burton's trek to Mecca was quite dangerous and his caravan was attacked by bandits (a common experience at the time). As he put it, "... neither Koran or Sultan enjoin the death of Jew or Christian intruding within the columns that note the sanctuary limits, nothing could save a European detected by the populace, or one who after pilgrimage declared himself an unbeliever."[13] The pilgrimage entitled him to the title of Hajji and to wear green head wrap. Burton's own account of his journey is given in *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah and Meccah* (1855).

Some members of his entourage suspected there was more to Burton than met the eye. He came close to being discovered one night when he lifted his robe to urinate, rather than squatting as an Arab would. He thought he was unseen, but the youngest member of his group happened to see him. The lad accused him of being an impostor, but let Burton convince him to keep his doubts to himself.[14]

When Burton returned to the British Army he sat for examination as an Arab linguist, which he failed.[15]

Early explorations (1854–1855)

Following his return to Cairo from Mecca, Burton sailed to India to rejoin his regiment. In March 1854, he transferred to the political department of the East India Company and went to Aden on the Arabian Peninsula in order to prepare for a new expedition, supported by the Royal Geographical Society, to explore the interior of the Somali Country and beyond, where Burton hoped to discover the large lakes he had heard about from Arab travellers. It was in Aden in September of this year that he first met Captain (then Lieutenant) John Hanning Speke who would accompany him on his most famous exploration. Burton undertook the first part of the trip alone. He made an expedition to Harar (in present day Ethiopia), which no European had entered (indeed there was a prophecy that the city would decline if a Christian was admitted inside). This leg of the expedition lasted three months, although much of the time was spent in the port of Zeila, where Burton, once again in disguise, awaited word that the road to Harar was safe. Burton not only travelled to Harar but also was introduced to the Emir and stayed in the city for ten days, officially a guest of the Emir but in reality his prisoner. The journey back was plagued by lack of supplies, and Burton wrote that he would have died of thirst had he not seen desert birds and realised they would be near water.

Following this adventure, he prepared to set out for the interior accompanied by Lieutenant Speke, Lieutenant G. E. Herne and Lieutenant William Stroyan and a number of Africans employed as bearers. However, before the expedition was able to leave camp, his party was attacked by a group of Somali *waranle* ("warriors"). The officers estimated the number of attackers at 200. In the ensuing fight, Stroyan was killed and Speke was captured and wounded in eleven places before he managed to escape. Burton was impaled with a javelin, the point entering one cheek and exiting the other. This wound left a notable scar that can be easily seen on portraits and photographs. He was forced to make his escape with the weapon still transfixing his head. It was no surprise then that he found the Somalis to be a "fierce and turbulent race".[16] However, the failure of this expedition was viewed harshly by the authorities, and a two-year investigation was set up to determine to what extent Burton was culpable for this disaster. While he was largely cleared of any blame, this did not help his career. He describes the harrowing attack in *First Footsteps in East Africa* (1856).

In 1855, Burton rejoined the army and travelled to the Crimea hoping to see active service in the Crimean War. He served on the staff of *Beatson's Horse* a corps of Bashi-bazouks, local fighters under the command

of General Beatson, in the Dardanelles. The corps was disbanded following a "mutiny" after they refused to obey orders and Burton's name was mentioned (to his detriment) in the subsequent inquiry.

Exploring the African Great Lakes (1856–1860)

Routes taken by the expeditions of Burton and Speke (1857–1858) and Speke and Grant (1863)

In 1856 the Royal Geographical Society funded another expedition in which Burton set off from Zanzibar to explore an "inland sea" that had been described by Arab traders and slavers. His mission was to study the area's tribes and to find out what exports might be possible from the region. It was hoped that the expedition might lead to the discovery of the source of the River Nile, although this was not an explicit aim. Burton had been told that only a fool would say his expedition aimed to find the source of the Nile because anything short of that would be regarded as a failure.

Before leaving for Africa, Burton became secretly engaged to Isabel Arundell. Her family, particularly her mother, would not allow a marriage since Burton was not a Catholic and was not wealthy, although in time the relationship became tolerated.

Speke again accompanied him and on the 27 June 1857 they set out from the east coast of Africa heading west in search of the lake or lakes. They were helped greatly by the Omani Arabs who lived and traded in the region. They followed the traditional caravan routes, hiring the professional porters and guides, who had been making similar treks for years. From the start the outward journey was beset with problems such as recruiting reliable bearers and the defalcation of equipment and supplies by deserting expedition members.

Both men were beset by a variety of tropical diseases on the journey. Speke was rendered blind for some of the journey and deaf in one ear (due to an infection caused by attempts to remove a beetle). Burton was unable to walk for some of the journey and had to be carried by the bearers.

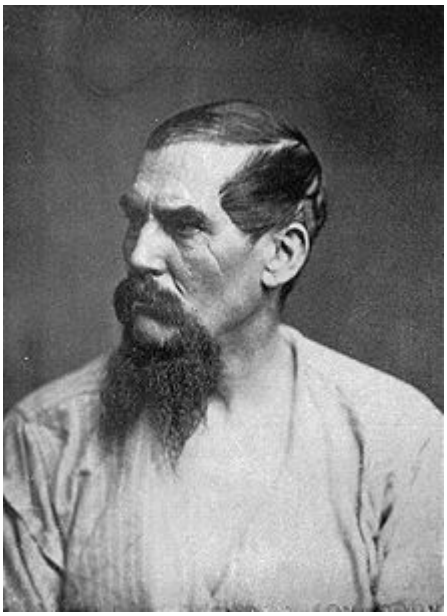
The expedition arrived at Lake Tanganyika in February 1858. Burton was awestruck by the sight of the magnificent lake, but Speke, who had been temporarily blinded by a disease, was unable to see the body of water. By this point much of their surveying equipment was lost, ruined, or stolen, and they were unable to complete surveys of the area as well as they wished. Burton was again taken ill on the return journey and Speke continued exploring without him, making a journey to the north and eventually locating the great Lake Victoria, or Victoria Nyanza. Lacking supplies and proper instruments Speke was unable to survey the area properly but was privately convinced that it was the long sought source of the Nile. Burton's description of the journey is given in *Lake Regions of Equatorial Africa* (1860). Speke gave his own account in *The Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863).[17]

Both Burton and Speke were in extremely poor health after the journey and returned home separately. As usual Burton kept very detailed notes, not just on the geography but also on the languages, customs, and even sexual habits of the people he encountered. Although it was Burton's last great expedition his geographical and cultural notes proved invaluable for subsequent explorations by Speke and James Augustus Grant, Sir Samuel Baker, David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley. Speke and Grant's (1863) exploration began on the east coast near Zanzibar again and went around the west side of Lake Victoria to Lake Albert and finally returning in triumph via the River Nile. However, crucially, they had lost track of the river's course between Lake Victoria and Albert. This left Burton, and others, unsatisfied that the source of the Nile was conclusively proven.

Burton and Speke

Lake Tanganyika photographed from orbit. Burton was the first European to see the lake.

Burton and Speke's exploration to Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria was, arguably, his most celebrated exploration but what followed was a prolonged public quarrel between the two men, which for a time damaged Burton's reputation. Speke was never Burton's first choice, but, due to illness, Speke was available. Speke being unable to speak any African language or capable of exploring was a severe trial during the trek. Speke exemplified the typical arrogant Imperialist attitudes despising Africans and Asians, hunting and killing animals indiscriminately. Burton solved the problem of Speke's handicap by hiring Sidi Mubarak Bombay who was able to communicate and guide Speke. From surviving letters it is clear that Speke's paranoia already was evident where he mistrusted and disliked Burton before the start of their second expedition. There are several reasons why they became estranged. It seems obvious that the two men were very different in character, with Speke being more in tune with the prevailing morality of Victorian England and imperialistic attitude to other cultures. There was obviously a great element of professional rivalry. Some biographers have suggested[*who?*] that homosexual friends of Speke (particularly Laurence Oliphant) stirred up trouble between the two. It also seems that Speke resented Burton's position as expedition leader and claimed that this leadership was nominal only and that Burton was an invalid for most of the second expedition. There were problems with debts run up by the expedition that were left unpaid when they left Africa. Speke, in collusion with the new Consul Rigby (a sworn enemy of Burton, who had bested Rigby in every linguist test in India), claimed that Burton had sole responsibility for these debts and Rigby used every official method to falsely undermine Burton. Finally, there was the issue of the source of the Nile, perhaps the greatest prize of its day to European explorers though well known to the Arab, Indian, and Omani merchants and traders. It is now known that Lake Victoria is a source, but at the time the issue was controversial. Speke's expedition with Burton's permission was led by Sidi Mubarak Bombay. It was undertaken without Burton who was incapacitated by several illnesses at the time. Speke's survey of the area was, by necessity, rudimentary and completely erroneous, leaving the issue unresolved. Burton (and indeed many eminent explorers such as Livingstone) were very sceptical that the lake was the primary source.



An undated photograph of Burton.

After the expedition, the two men travelled home to England separately with Speke arriving in London first. Despite an agreement between them that they would give their first public speech together, Speke gave a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in which he made the claim that his discovery, Lake Victoria, was the source of the Nile. When Burton arrived in London he found Speke being lionised, and felt his own role was being considered as that of sickly companion. Furthermore, Speke was organising other expeditions to the region and clearly had no plans to include Burton. Burton had many enemies because of his "going native" and anti-imperialist sentiments.

In the subsequent months, Speke and his clique did much to attempt to harm Burton's reputation, even going so far as to claim that Burton had tried to poison him during the expedition.[*citation needed*] Meanwhile Burton spoke out against Speke's claim to have discovered the source of the Nile, saying that the evidence was inconclusive and the measurements made by Speke were inaccurate. It is notable that in Speke's expedition with Grant he made Grant sign a statement saying, amongst other things, "I renounce all my rights to publishing ... my own account [of the expedition] until approved of by Captain Speke or the R. G. S. (Royal Geographical Society)".[18]

Speke undertook a second expedition, along with Captain James Grant and Sidi Mubarak Bombay, to prove that Lake Victoria was the true source of the Nile. After a harrowing journey through the kingdom of Buganda, Speke found a large river issuing from the north of the lake. He followed the river, off and on, until he met Samuel Baker, who had ascended the Nile from Khartoum. Because Speke did not follow the river's course where it bends into Lake Albert (which Baker subsequently discovered), Speke left room for doubt that the river flowing out of Lake Victoria was the same river flowing into Lake Albert, which Baker proved to be at least a secondary source of the Nile. Several geographers, including Burton and Livingstone were still unconvinced that Lake Victoria was the true source of the Nile, although most members of the Royal Geographical Society, which awarded Speke its Gold Medal, believed the matter to be settled. On 16 September 1864 Burton and Speke were due to debate the issue of the source of the Nile in front of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at that body's annual meeting in Bath. Burton was regarded as the superior public speaker and scholar and was likely to get the better of such a debate.[*citation needed*] On the day prior to the debate, Burton and Speke sat near each other in the lecture hall. According to Burton's wife, who was present, Speke stood up, said "I can't stand this any longer," and abruptly left the hall. That afternoon, while hunting on the nearby estate of a relative, Speke was discovered lying near a stone wall, felled by a fatal gunshot wound from his hunting rifle. Burton learned of Speke's death the following day while at the lecture hall waiting for the debate to begin. It has been speculated that Speke's death was a suicide. However, based on the evidence of the two persons present at the scene, the jury at the

coroner's inquest ruled it an accident. The London Times obituary surmised that Speke, while climbing over the wall, had carelessly pulled the gun after himself with the muzzle pointing at his chest and accidentally discharged it by knocking it against the wall. Speke's only biographer, Alexander Maitland, concurs. However, because of the eerie coincidence of the timing of his death, speculation of suicide has never abated. One motive often given is that Speke killed himself to avoid losing a meaningless debate with Burton. Another is that Speke was ashamed of the way he had treated Burton. There is no documentary evidence to support either claim.[*citation needed*]

Diplomatic service, scholarship, and death (1861–1890)

Richard and Isabel Burton's tomb at Mortlake, Surrey

Close up of inscription on the tomb

In January 1861, Richard and Isabel married in a quiet Catholic ceremony although he did not adopt the Catholic faith at this time. Shortly after this, the couple were forced to spend some time apart when he formally entered the Foreign Service as consul at Fernando Po, the modern island of Bioko in Equatorial Guinea. This was not a prestigious appointment; because the climate was considered extremely unhealthy for Europeans, Isabel could not accompany him. Burton spent much of this time exploring the coast of West Africa.

The couple were reunited in 1865 when Burton was transferred to Santos in Brazil. Once there, Burton traveled through Brazil's central highlands, canoeing down the Sao Francisco river from its source to the falls of Paulo Afonso.[19]

In 1869 he was made consul in Damascus, an ideal post for someone with Burton's knowledge of the region and customs. However, Burton made many enemies during his time there. He managed to antagonize much of the Jewish population of the area because of a dispute concerning money lending. It had been the practice for the British consulate to take action against those who defaulted on loans but Burton saw no reason to continue this practice and this caused a great deal of hostility. He and Isabel greatly enjoyed their time there and befriended Lady Jane Digby, the well-known adventurer, and Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, a prominent leader of the Algerian revolution then living in exile.

However, the area was in some turmoil at the time with considerable tensions between the Christian, Jewish and Muslim populations. Burton did his best to keep the peace and resolve the situation but this sometimes led him into trouble. On one occasion, he claims to have escaped an attack by hundreds of armed horsemen

and camel riders sent by Mohammed Rashid Pasha, the Governor of Syria. He wrote "I have never been so flattered in my life than to think it would take three hundred men to kill me."[20]

In addition to these incidents, there were a number of people who disliked Burton and wished him removed from such a sensitive position. Eventually, to resolve the situation, Burton was transferred to Trieste (then part of Austria-Hungary) during 1871. Burton was never particularly content with this post but it required little work and allowed him the freedom to write and travel.

In 1863 Burton co-founded the *Anthropological Society of London* with Dr. James Hunt. In Burton's own words, the main aim of the society (through the publication of the periodical *Anthropologia*) was "to supply travellers with an organ that would rescue their observations from the outer darkness of manuscript and print their curious information on social and sexual matters". On 5 February 1886 he was awarded a knighthood (KCMG) by Queen Victoria.

He wrote a number of travel books in this period that were not particularly well received. His best-known contributions to literature were those considered risqué or even pornographic at the time and which were published under the auspices of the Kama Shastra society. These books include *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* (1883) (popularly known as the Kama Sutra), *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (1885) (popularly known as The Arabian Nights), *The Perfumed Garden of the Shaykh Nefzawi* (1886) and *The Supplemental Nights to the Thousand Nights and a Night* (sixteen volumes 1886–1898).

Published in this period, but composed on his return journey from Mecca, *The Kasidah*[7] has been cited as evidence of Burton's status as a Sufi. Deliberately presented by Burton as a translation, the poem and his notes and commentary on it contain layers of Sufic meaning, that seem to have been designed to project Sufi teaching in the West.[21] *"Do what thy manhood bids thee do/ from none but self expect applause;/ He noblest lives and noblest dies/ who makes and keeps his self-made laws"* is The Kasidah's most often-quoted passage. As well as references to many themes from Classical Western myths, the poem contains many laments that are accented with fleeting imagery such as repeated comparisons to *"the tinkling of the Camel bell"* that becomes inaudible as the animal vanishes in the darkness of the desert.

Other works of note include a collection of Hindu tales, *Vikram and the Vampire* (1870); and his uncompleted history of swordsmanship, *The Book of the Sword* (1884). He also translated *The Lusiads*, the Portuguese national epic by Luís de Camões, in 1880 and wrote a sympathetic biography of the poet and adventurer the next year. The book *The Jew, the Gipsy and el Islam* was published posthumously in 1898 and was controversial for its criticism of Jews and asserted the existence of Jewish human sacrifices. (Burton's investigations into this had provoked hostility from the Jewish population in Damascus (see the Damascus affair). The manuscript of the book included an appendix discussing the topic in more detail, but by the decision of his widow, it was not included in the book when published).

Burton died in Trieste early on the morning of 20 October 1890 of a heart attack. His wife Isabel persuaded a priest to perform the last rites, although Burton was not a Catholic and this action later caused a rift between Isabel and some of Burton's friends. It has been suggested that the death occurred very late on 19 October and that Burton was already dead by the time the last rites were administered.

Isabel never recovered from the loss. After his death she burned many of her husband's papers, including journals and a planned new translation of *The Perfumed Garden* to be called *The Scented Garden*, for which she had been offered six thousand guineas and which she regarded as his "magnum opus." She believed she was acting to protect her husband's reputation, and that she had been instructed to burn the manuscript of *The Scented Garden* by his spirit, but her actions have been widely condemned.[22]

Isabel wrote a biography in praise of her husband.[23] The couple are buried in a remarkable tomb in the shape of a Bedouin tent at Mortlake in southwest London.[24]

Kama Shastra Society

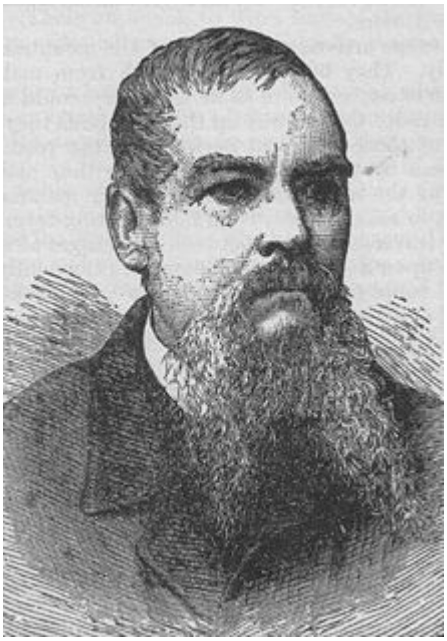
Burton had long had an interest in sexuality and erotic literature. However, the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 had resulted in many jail sentences for publishers, with prosecutions being brought by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Burton referred to the society and those who shared its views as *Mrs Grundy*. A way around this was the private circulation of books amongst the members of a society. For this reason Burton, together with Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, created the Kama Shastra Society to print and circulate books that would be illegal to publish in public.[25]

One of the most celebrated of all his books is his translation of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (more commonly known in English as *The Arabian Nights* because of Andrew Lang's abridged collection) in ten volumes, (1885) with six further volumes being added later. The volumes were printed by the Kama Shastra Society in a subscribers-only edition of one thousand with a guarantee that there would never be a larger printing of the books in this form. The stories collected were often sexual in content and were considered pornography at the time of publication. In particular, the *Terminal Essay* in volume 10 of the *Nights* contained an 14,000 word essay entitled "Pederasty" (Volume 10, section IV, D). Burton postulated that male homosexuality was prevalent in an area of the southern latitudes named by him the "Sotadic zone".[26] Rumors about Burton's own sexuality were already circulating and were further incited by this work.

Perhaps Burton's best-known book is his translation of *The Kama Sutra*. In fact, it is untrue that he was the translator since the original manuscript was in ancient Sanskrit which he could not read. However, he collaborated with Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot on the work and provided translations from other manuscripts of later translations. The Kama Shastra Society first printed the book in 1883 and numerous editions of the Burton translation are in print to this day.[25]

His English translation from a French edition of the Arabic erotic guide *The Perfumed Garden* was printed as *The Perfumed Garden of the Cheikh Nefzaoui: A Manual of Arabian Erotology* (1886). After Burton's death, Isabel burnt many of his papers, including a manuscript of a subsequent translation, *The Scented Garden*, containing the final chapter of the work, on pederasty. Burton all along intended for this translation to be published after his death, to provide an income for his widow,[27] and also, as a final gesture of defiance against Victorian society.

Scandals



Burton pictured later in life

Burton's writings are unusually open and frank about his interest in sex and sexuality. His travel writing is often full of details about the sexual lives of the inhabitants of areas he travelled through. Burton's interest in sexuality led him to make measurements of the lengths of the sexual organs of male inhabitants of various regions which he includes in his travel books. He also describes sexual techniques common in the regions he visited, often hinting that he had participated[*citation needed*], hence breaking both sexual and racial taboos of his day. Many people at the time considered the Kama Shastra Society and the books it published scandalous.

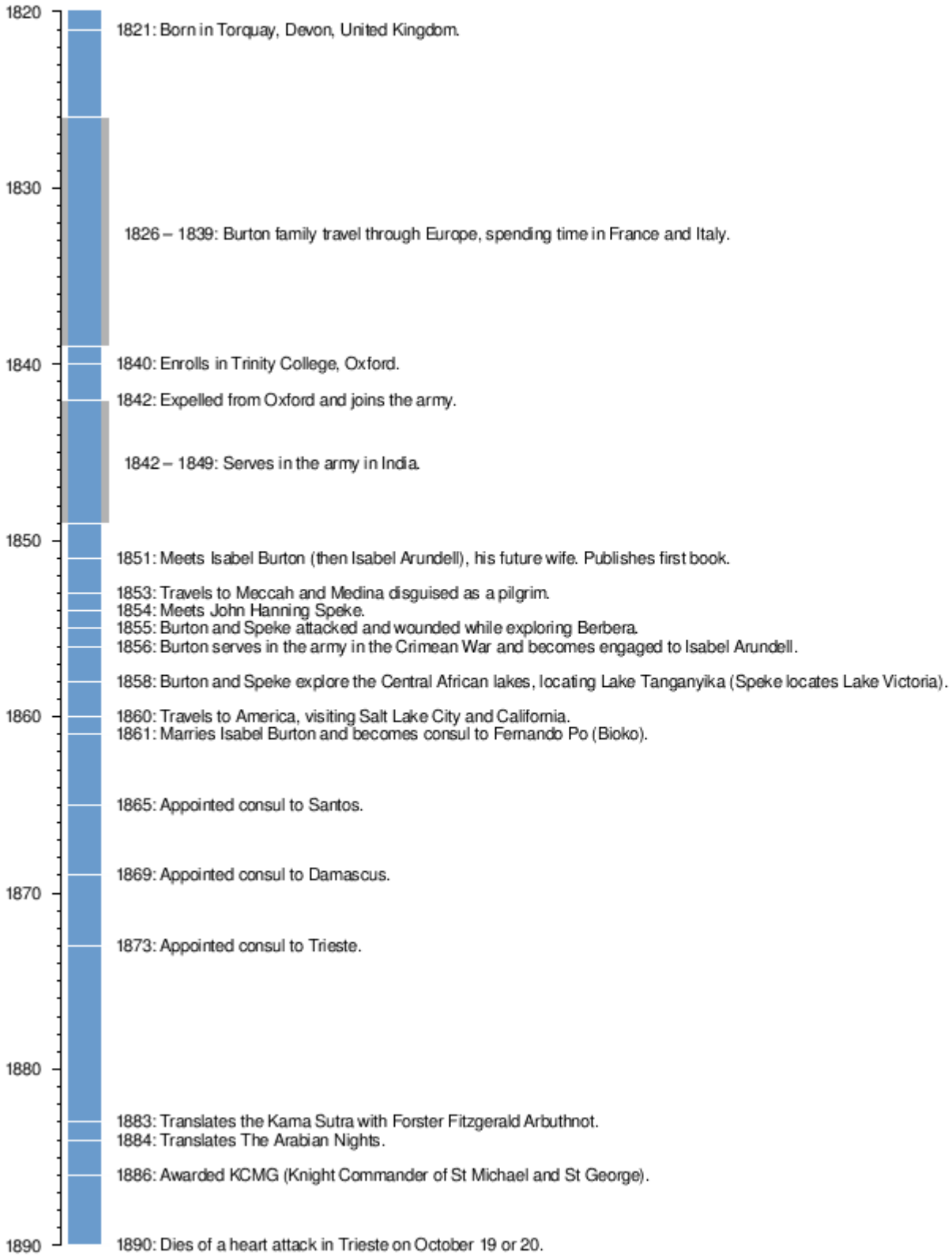
Biographers disagree on whether or not Burton ever experienced homosexual sex (he never directly acknowledges it in his writing). Allegations began in his army days when General Sir Charles James Napier requested that Burton go undercover to investigate a male brothel reputed to be frequented by British soldiers. It has been suggested that Burton's detailed report on the workings of the brothel may have led some to believe he had been a customer.[28] There is no documentary evidence that such a report was written or submitted, nor that Sir Charles ordered such research by Burton, and it has been argued that this is one of Burton's embellishments[29]

Burton was believed to have murdered the boy who caught him urinating in European fashion on the trip to Mecca. Burton denied this, pointing out that killing the boy would almost certainly have led to his being discovered as an impostor. Burton became so tired of denying this accusation that he took to baiting his accusers. A doctor once asked him, "How do you feel when you have killed a man?" Burton retorted, "Quite jolly, what about you?" When asked by a priest about the same incident Burton is said to have replied "Sir, I'm proud to say I have committed every sin in the Decalogue."[30]

These allegations coupled with Burton's often-irascible nature were said to have harmed his career and may explain why he was not promoted further, either in army life or in the diplomatic service. As an obituary described: "... he was ill fitted to run in official harness, and he had a Byronic love of shocking people, of telling tales against himself that had no foundation in fact."[31] Ouida reported that "Men at the FO [Foreign Office] ... used to hint dark horrors about Burton, and certainly justly or unjustly he was disliked, feared and suspected ... not for what he had done, but for what he was believed capable of doing".[32] Whatever the truth of the many allegations made against him, Burton's interests and outspoken nature ensured that he was always a controversial character in his lifetime.

Chronology

Timeline of Richard Francis Burton's life (1821–1890)


1820
1830
1840
1850
1860
1870
1880
1890
1821: Born in Torquay, Devon, United Kingdom.
1826 – 1839: Burton family travel through Europe, spending time in France and Italy.
1840: Enrolls in Trinity College, Oxford.
1842: Expelled from Oxford and joins the army.
1842 – 1849: Serves in the army in India.
1851: Meets Isabel Burton (then Isabel Arundell), his future wife. Publishes first book.
1853: Travels to Meccah and Medina disguised as a pilgrim.
1854: Meets John Hanning Speke.
1855: Burton and Speke attacked and wounded while exploring Berbera.
1856: Burton serves in the army in the Crimean War and becomes engaged to Isabel Arundell.
1858: Burton and Speke explore the Central African lakes, locating Lake Tanganyika (Speke locates Lake Victoria).
1860: Travels to America, visiting Salt Lake City and California.
1861: Marries Isabel Burton and becomes consul to Fernando Po (Bioko).
1865: Appointed consul to Santos.
1869: Appointed consul to Damascus.
1873: Appointed consul to Trieste.
1883: Translates the Kama Sutra with Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot.
1884: Translates The Arabian Nights.
1886: Awarded KCMG (Knight Commander of St Michael and St George).
1890: Dies of a heart attack in Trieste on October 19 or 20.

The 5 Somaliland shilling depicting Sir Richard Burton

In popular culture

This "In popular culture" section **may contain minor or trivial references**. Please reorganize this content to explain the subject's impact on popular culture rather than simply listing appearances, and remove trivial references. *(April 2010)*

Fiction

- Harrison, William (1984). *Burton and Speke*. New York: St. Martin's Press. ISBN 0312108737., a novel of the two friends/rivals
- Win Blevins, *The Rock Child,* 1998. Burton and his newly acquired friend, Sam Clemens, help a Tibetan nun and a half-blood Indian escape a deadly pursuer.
- Philip José Farmer featured Burton as one of several protagonists in his science fiction *Riverworld Saga* (1966 – 1993).
- In the short story *The Aleph* by Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, a manuscript by Burton is discovered in a library. The manuscript contains a description of a mirror in which the whole universe is reflected.
- There is a brief reference to Burton in Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 novel *The Lost World*, which mentions Burton by name in the text but gives no information about him; when Doyle's novel was first published, Burton's exploits were comparatively recent.
- George MacDonald Fraser also mentions Burton repeatedly in his *Flashman* series (1969 – 2005) of historical novels (with the narrator, Flashman, usually referring to him as "that rogue Dick Burton").
- Robert Doherty's *Area 51* novels (1997 – 2004) feature Burton as the discoverer of a secret alien race. The books include sections from Burton's writings.
- In *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* novel, Burton is implied to have been a member of a past League.
- Mark Hodder's book *The Strange Affair of Spring Heeled Jack* (2010) features Burton in an alternate steampunk reality in which he does not take the job as consul.

Film

- *Mountains of the Moon* (1990) (starring Patrick Bergin as Burton) related the story of the Burton-Speke exploration and the subsequent controversy over the source of the Nile. This was based on the 1984 novel *Burton and Speke* by William Harrison.
- *Zero Patience* (1993) re-imagines Burton in a contemporary setting as a closeted gay man obsessed with researching the Patient Zero hypothesis of AIDS transmission.

Television

- In *The Sentinel* (1996–1999) (starring Richard Burgi and Garett Maggart) a fictional monograph attributed to Richard Burton ("the explorer, not the actor") forms the background of the show's mythology.
- In *Riverworld* (2010) a Syfy Channel movie based on Philip José Farmer's *Riverworld Saga* novels.

Works

- *Goa and the Blue Mountains* (1851)
- *Scinde or the Unhappy Valley* (1851)
- *Sindh and the Races That Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (1851)
- *Falconry in the Valley of the Indus* (1852)
- *A Complete System of Bayonet Exercise (1853)*
- *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Meccah* 3 Vols. (1855-6). See also *PDF facsimile*
- *First Footsteps in East Africa* (1856). See also *PDF Facsimile* .
- *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa (1859)*
- *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860)
- *The City of the Saints, Among the Mormons and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (1861)
- *Wanderings in West Africa* (1863)
- *Abeokuta and the Cameroon Mountains* (1863)
- *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahomé* (1864)
- *The Nile Basin* (1864) With James McQueen.
- *Wit and Wisdom From West Africa* (1865)
- *Stone Talk (1865)*
- *The Guide-book. A Pictorial Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina* (1865).
- *Explorations of the Highlands of Brazil* (1869)
- *Letters From the Battlefields of Paraguay* (1870)
- *Vikram and the Vampire or Tales of Hindu Devilry* (1870). See also *PDF Facsimile*.
- *Unexplored Syria* (1872)
- *Zanzibar* (1872)
- *Ultima Thule* (1872)
- *The Lands of Cazembe. Lacerda's Journey to Cazembe in 1798* (1873). Edited and translated by Burton.
- *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse, in A.D. 1547-1555, Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil.* Translated by Albert Tootal and annotated by Richard F. Burton.
- *A New System of Sword Exercise for Infantry* (1876)
- *Two Trips to Gorilla Land and the Cataracts of the Congo* (1876) See also *PDF Facsimile*.
- *Etruscan Bologna* (1876)
- *Sind Revisited* (1877)
- *The Gold Mines of Midian* (1878)
- *The Land of Midian (revisited)* (1879)
- *Os Lusiadas (The Lusiads)* (two volumes 1880)
- *The Kasidah of Haji Abdu El-Yezdi* (1880). See also *PDF Facsimile*.
- *A Glance at the Passion-Play* (1881).
- *To the Gold Coast for Gold* 2 Vols. (1883). See also *PDF Facsimile*.
- *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* (1883) (with F. F. Arbuthnot).
- *Camoens: His Life and His Lusiads* (1883)
- *Camoens. The Lyricks* 2 Vols (1884)
- *The Book of the Sword* (1884)
- *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (ten volumes 1885)
- *The Perfumed Garden of the Shaykh Nefzawi* (1886)
- *The Supplemental Nights to the Thousand Nights and a Night* (six volumes 1886 – 1888)
- *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam* (1898)
- *The Sentiment of the Sword: A Country-House Dialogue* (1911)

Burton also wrote a great number of *journal and magazine pieces*, many of which have never been catalogued. Over 200 of these have been collected in PDF facsimile format at *burtoniana.org*.

Brief selections from a variety of Burton's writings are available in Frank McLynn's *Of No Country: An Anthology of Richard Burton* (1990; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

Biographies and other works about Burton

Books and articles

- Brodie, Fawn M. (1967). *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN 0907871232.
- Burton, Isabel (1893). *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton KCMG, FRGS*. **Vols. 1 and 2**. London: Chapman and Hall. http://burtoniana.org/biography/1893-Isabel-Life/index.html.
- Edwardes, Allen (1963). *Death Rides a Camel*. New York: The Julian Press.
- Farwell, Byron (1963). *Burton: A Biography of Sir Richard Francis Burton*. New York: Penguin Books. ISBN 0140120688.
- Godsall, Jon R (2008). *The Tangled Web - A life of Sir Richard Burton*. London: Matador Books. http://troubador.co.uk/book_info.asp?bookid=592.
- Hitchman, Francis (1887), *Richard F. Burton, K.C.M.G.: His Early, Private and Public Life with an Account of his Travels and Explorations*, Two volumes; London: Sampson and Low.
- Kennedy, Dane (2005), *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World*, Harvard University Press
- Lovell, Mary S. (1998). *A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard & Isabel Burton*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN 0393046729.
- McDow, Thomas F. 'Trafficking in Persianness: Richard Burton between mimicry and similitude in the Indian Ocean and Persianate worlds'. Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 30.3 (2010): 491-511. ISSN 1089-201X
- McLynn, Frank (1991). *From the Sierras to the Pampas: Richard Burton's Travels in the Americas, 1860-69*. London: Century. ISBN 0712637893.
- McLynn, Frank (1993). *Burton: Snow on the Desert*. London: John Murray Publishing. ISBN 0719548187.
- James L. Newman: *Path without Glory - Richard Francis Burton in Africa*, Potomac Books, Dulles VA 2010 ISBN 978-1-59797-287-1
- Ondaatje, Christopher (1998). *Journey to the Source of the Nile*. Toronto: HarperCollins. ISBN 0002000199.
- Ondaatje, Christopher (1996). *Sindh Revisited: A Journey in the Footsteps of Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton*. Toronto: HarperCollins. ISBN 1590482212.
- Rice, Edward (1990). *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: The Secret Agent Who Made the Pilgrimage to Makkah, Discovered the Kama Sutra, and Brought the Arabian Nights to the West*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Wisnicki, Adrian S. (2008). "Cartographical Quandaries: The Limits of Knowledge Production in Burton's and Speke's Search for the Source of the Nile". *History in Africa* **35**: 455–79.
- Wisnicki, Adrian S. (2009). "Charting the Frontier: Indigenous Geography, Arab-Nyamwezi Caravans, and the East African Expedition of 1856-59". *Victorian Studies* 51.1 (Aut.): 103-37.
- Wright, Thomas (1906). *The Life of Sir Richard Burton*. **Vols. 1 and 2**. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. ISBN 1426414552. http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/burton/richard/b97zw/.

Film documentaries

- *Search for the Nile*, 1971 BBC mini-series featured Kenneth Haigh as Burton
- In *The Victorian Sex Explorer*, Rupert Everett documents Burton's travels. Part of the Channel Four (UK) 'Victorian Passions' season. First Broadcast on 9 June 2008.[33]

References

1. ^ Lovell (1998), p. xvii.
2. ^ Lovell (1998), p. 1.
3. ^ Wright (1905), vol. 1, p. 37.
4. ^ Page, William (1908). *A History of the County of Hertford*. Constable. vol. 2, pp. 349–351. ISBN 0712904751. http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43292&strquery=elstree.
5. ^ Wright (1905), vol. 1, p. 38.
6. ^ Wright (1905), vol. 1, p. 52.
7. ^ [a] [b] *The Kasîdah Of Hâjî Abdû El-Yezdî* by Richard F. Burton (1870).
8. ^ *Falconry In The Valley of the Indus*, Richard F. Burton (John Van Voorst 1852) page 93.
9. ^ *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton KCMG, FRGS*, Isabel Burton (Chapman and Hall 1893), Vol. 1, page 123.
10. ^ *A Rage to Live* page 58.
11. ^ Wright (1905), vol. 1, pp. 119–120.
12. ^ Discoverers Web: Ludovico di Varthema.
13. ^ *Selected Papers on Anthropology, Travel, and Exploration* by Richard Burton, edited by Norman M. Penzer (London, A. M. Philpot 1924) p. 30.
14. ^ *A Rage to Live* by Mary S. Lovell, (Abacus 1998) page 142
15. ^ Lovell. page 154.
16. ^ In last of a series of dispatches from Mogadishu, Daniel Howden reports on the artists fighting to keep a tradition alive, The Independant, dated Thursday, 2 December 2010.
17. ^ The Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile by John Hanning Speke at www.wollamshram.ca (URL accessed 10 April 2006)
18. ^ *A Rage to Live* page 341.
19. ^ Wright (1905), vol. 1, p. 200.
20. ^ *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton KCMG, FRGS* Vol. 1 page 517.
21. ^ *The Sufis* by Idries Shah (1964)
22. ^ Wright (1906), vol. 2, pp. 252–254.
23. ^ *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton KCMG, FRGS*
24. ^ Burton Tomb Restoration Fund, www.burtonfund.org (URL accessed 10 April 2006)
25. ^ [a] [b] Ben Grant, "Translating/'The' "Kama Sutra"", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Connecting Cultures (2005), 509-516
26. ^ Sir Richard Francis Burton: Explorer of the Sotadic Zone
27. ^ The Romance of Lady Isabel Burton (chapter 38) by Isabel Burton (1897) (URL accessed 12 June 2006)
28. ^ Burton, Sir Richard *Kama Sutra*, p. 14, Park Street Press, 1991 ISBN 0-89281-441-1
29. ^ Godsall, Jon R *The Tangled Web - A Life of Sir Richard Burton*, p. 47 - 48, Matador Books, 2008 ISBN 978-1-906510-42-8
30. ^ *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* by Fawn M. Brodie (W.W. Norton & Company Inc.: New York 1967) p 3.
31. ^ Obituary in Athenaeum No. 3287, 25 October 1890 page 547.
32. ^ *Richard Burton* by Ouida, article appearing in the Fortnightly Review June (1906) quoted in *A Rage to Live*
33. ^ "Victorian Passions" (Channel Four).

External links

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Wikisource has the text of the 1911 Encyclopædia Britannica article ***Burton, Sir Richard Francis***.

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- Complete Works of Richard Burton at burtoniana.org. Includes over 200 of Burton's journal and magazine pieces.
- Works by Richard Francis Burton at Project Gutenberg
- Archival material relating to Richard Francis Burton listed at the UK National Register of Archives